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OLAF LILJEKRANS AND IBSEN'S LATER WORKS

In a previous article of this Journal (Vol. IX, No. 1, 1910) the writer attempted to point out the essential relation of Henrik Ibsen's *Paa Vidderne* (1859) to his famous dramatic poem, *Peer Gynt* (1867.) In both of these works the influence of Romanticism is still apparent in the fantastic and imaginative setting, in the highly colored poetic thought and in the use of verse form instead of prose. *Peer Gynt* is perhaps the greatest work of art in Scandinavian literature and therefore in itself well worth a close and appreciative study. But from the view-point of the author's literary development it is by all means the most important of Ibsen's works, since it not only contains the germs of philosophic thought which are later developed in the great social dramas that follow but in that it also breathes the life and tradition of ballad folk-lore poetry upon which the literary ideals of the author had been based during the early period of his life. The transition from the Romantic ballad poetry to the philosophic themes which constitute the modern problem play or rather the fusion of these two literary ideals is nowhere more marked or more skillfully effected than in *Peer Gynt*. The problem of self-realization ('at være sig selv'), the satirical attacks upon the self-sufficiency of the Norwegian people, the general hostile tone assumed towards the half-heartedness, the deceit and selfishness of human character, the glorification of woman's fidelity and self-sacrifice; in short, the whole inner significance of the work is essentially a prelude to the great storm which was to follow in that long series of attacks upon human institutions, political and social, which have inseparably connected the name of Henrik Ibsen with the modern problem play. The imaginative and poetic form, on the other hand, in which the author moulds this thought, belongs to the earlier period in his life in which folk-lore and ballad, Welhaven and Oehlenschläger left their trace of Romantic idealism.

It is to this period that we must turn our attention if we are to arrive at a true appreciation of the fundamental form and nature of this work, for *Peer Gynt* was conceived in the

spirit of Romantic thought and is essentially a product of Romantic ideals. The exquisite poetry clad in the garb of Norwegian folk-lore, so fanciful and so artistic, is the perfection of a literary art which the author had previously practised with perhaps less skillful hands in his early Romantic dramas. His use of Asbjørnsen's and Moe's, 'Norske Folkeeventyr' (1842), and Asbjørnsen's, 'Norske Huldreeventyr og Folkesagn' (1845), to form the legendary basis of his story show the Romantic conception with which he started. Scandinavian folk-lore forms the basis of his early Romantic productions and it is folk-lore which is likewise the basis of *Peer Gynt*. Folk-lore in *Peer Gynt*, the diffuse imagery of mountain scenery and the imaginative setting in which the poetic thought of *Paa Vidderne* is framed, are the expression of the same tendency that the author showed when he wrote his first dramas, *Kjæmpehøjen* (1850), *Sankt Hans Natten* (1852), *Gildet paa Solhaug* (1855) and *Olaf Liljekrans* (1856). So filled was the author at this time with the spirit of folk ballad-poetry that he affirmed in an article upon this subject ('Om kjæmpevisen og dens betydning for kunstpoesien' in the *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*, 1857), immediately after the publication of *Olaf Liljekrans*, that of all types of literature the heroic ballad was the most suitable for dramatic purposes. While under the influence of this conviction and inspired with the aesthetic ideals of this phase of the Romantic movement in the North, Ibsen attained to the height of his poetic art. After the publication of *Peer Gynt*, Georg Brandes remarked that the poet's Pegasus had been shot from beneath him. With the extinction of Romantic ideals poetic inspiration seems to have forsaken Ibsen, and in its place grew up that perfect and exact sense of truth in life which he expressed in his prose dramas, unexcelled in their mechanical structure.

If *Peer Gynt* is the last product of Ibsen's purely poetic genius, it is of great importance to trace the relation of the Romantic elements in this poem to his early works when the spirit of this movement was his chief inspiration. There is much in both *Peer Gynt* and *Paa Vidderne* that had its inception long before. One of the most important of Ibsen's early

productions, which has a more or less direct bearing upon certain fundamental conceptions in these two works, is *Olaf Liljekrans*.

Little heretofore has been known about this drama, inasmuch as it was not published until 1902, existing previous to this date in only two manuscript copies: one, in the library of the Bergen Theater until sometime during the eighties but subsequently transferred to the author's private property, and the other, in the library of the University of Christiania. But in the year 1902 the drama was given to the public in a 'Supplementsbind' of Ibsen's 'Samlede Værker,' provided with excellent biographical notes by Halvdan Koht (for bibliography of *Olaf Liljekrans*, see pp. V-VI). This drama was the outgrowth of a previous work, likewise founded upon Norwegian folk-lore: namely, *Rypen i Justedal*, *nationalt Skuespil i fire Acter af Brynjolf Bjarme* (Ibsen's early pseudonym), 1850. *Rypen i Justedal* was founded upon a similar story called *Justedalsrypen*, which was contained in A. Faye's collection of folk-lore tales (A. Faye. *Norske Folkesagn*. 2nd Edition. Chra. 1844. p. 129), the first version of which is now in the library of the University of Christiania. Only two acts of *Rypen i Justedel* were ever completed.¹ The piece remained untouched for several years until the author's enthusiastic study of M. B. Landstad's collection of Norwegian folk-ballads (*Norske Folkeviser*. 1852-53), directed his attention again to the subject. Discarding the previous title the author now worked his material over into a new form under the influence of the heroic ballad, *Olaf Liljekrans* (Landstad. 1853). *Olaf Liljekrans* ('A Romantic Drama in Three Acts') was finished in 1856 and acted in Bergen, Jan. 2 and 4, 1857, but with only mediocre success. The play was met with sharp criticism from many quarters and was performed only these two times. Nor did Ibsen, himself, seem to be entirely satisfied with it. After he left Bergen in the

¹ Fortunately this interesting and important fragment is now available to students of Ibsen literature through the publication of the author's 'Posthumous Works' (Efterladte Skrifter, udgivne av Halvdan Koht og Julius Elias. Chr. og Kjøbenhavn. 1909. p. 339 ff). The study of Ibsen is also materially furthered by the illuminating introduction which furnishes many heretofore unknown facts.

summer of 1857 and had taken up his residence in Christiania, he renewed his work upon it in 1859, with a view towards working it over into an opera, entitled *Fjeldfuglen*. But he never finished more than the first act (Efterladte Skrifter. p. 433 ff.), now preserved in the library of the University of Christiania. In a letter of July 18, 1861, he asked the composer M. A. Udbye of Trondhjem to write the music for his new opera, but soon afterwards, in 1862, expressed his conviction that the drama itself was not a suitable theme for operatic treatment. He then laid the work aside for all time, to enter into a new sphere of literary ideals inspired by the Old Norse sagas which had marked the dramas of Oehlen-schläger and his school. It was this new literary ideal dawning upon the poet's consciousness, which rendered him powerless to complete the old as he had conceived it before the Romantic ballad poetry had begun to give way to the Saga literature. In Olaf Liljekrans Romanticism had reached its high-water mark and already begun to recede. Prose and poetry struggle for the upper hand. Alfild and Olaf sing now in the wild tones of the Norse ballad, children of phantasy, feeling and nature, and now reason with the consciousness of purely rational beings, seeking a satisfactory solution of a life's problem. The vital sentiment of this work foreshadows the gigantic struggles for self-mastery which characterized Ibsen's subsequent works, while the ballad form and Romantic setting reflect the coloring of an already decadent period in his literary ideals. *Olaf Liljekrans* marks, in Ibsen's literary career, the wane of ballad poetry which had its beginning in *Sankt Hans Natten* (1852), the most phantasmagoric of all his works. Yet even in *Sankt Hans Natten* the marked similarity in the phantastic, hob-goblin spirit with the ballad tone in *Peer Gynt* cannot be denied. In fact, it has been pointed out (Fredrik Paasche. Smaaskrifter fra det litteratur-historiske seminar. V. Gildet paa Solhaug. Chra. 1908) that the second ballad in *Sankt Hans Natten* (Efterladte Skrifter. p. 409 ff.) is 'very probably' the source of Solvejg's song in *Peer Gynt*: 'Kanske vil der gaa baade vinter og vaar.' In *Olaf Liljekrans* we have still more that is later reflected in both *Peer Gynt* (cf. Georg Brandes. Henrik Ib-

sen. Kjøb. 1898. pp. 126-133),¹ and *Paa Vidderne*. The great struggle for self-realisation that involves self-annihilation from which alone perfect love can be attained, the longing for the heights far above the common life of prosaic toil and trouble where the spirit of nature and the love of God exalt the soul into a new and ideal existence, these fundamental concepts of *Paa Vidderne* and *Peer Gynt* are traceable also in *Olaf Liljekrans*, though to a much less marked degree. These elements which are essential to the redemption of the human soul form the rudimentary basis of that psychological thought which afterwards developed to gigantic proportions in the author's social dramas. On the other hand, the phantastic and dreamy spirit of the 'gallant' Peer, the perfect child of God and nature which we meet in Solvejg reflect the spirit of early Romantic idealism which received a far more extravagant expression in the characters of Olaf and Alfhild.

Let us consider in detail those elements which *Peer Gynt*, *Paa Vidderne* and *Olaf Liljekrans* have in common. First, the feeling of limitation and the desire to attain to a new and ideal existence upon the heights is an unmistakable motif running throughout all three works, especially strong in *Paa Vidderne* and *Olaf Liljekrans*. In *Paa Vidderne* the main theme is founded upon this sentiment, in *Olaf Liljekrans* it is a mere incident lending the quality of moral character to a Romantic conception, while in *Peer Gynt* it receives attention only at certain moments of profound moral conviction. The relation of *Peer Gynt* to *Paa Vidderne* in connection with this symbol has been discussed in a previous article (Journal. IX. No. 1. 1910. Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and *Paa Vidderne*), but will here be somewhat extended in view of the new light which *Olaf Liljekrans* has shed upon this question. In *Olaf Liljekrans* both Olaf and Alfhild feel intensely the limitations of their former existence when the magic charm of love had not yet captivated their hearts. In the ballad *Olaf Liljekrans*, (Landstad p. 355) Olaf meets a band of elf-women upon the mountains who are determined to give him a love-potion that he

¹ Georg Brandes here compares the general atmosphere and form of *Olaf Liljekrans* with that of *Peer Gynt*, and cites a passage in Act IV, Sc. 2 of *Olaf Liljekrans*, which bears resemblance to the general tone of satirical allusions in the Dovregubben scenes in *Peer Gynt*.

may forsake his betrothed, but he rejects their seductions with heroic fidelity. Thereupon the elves determine he must die. In Ibsen's drama, Olaf, who is betrothed, wanders away from his home and meets upon the mountains a beautiful elf-maiden with whom he falls desperately in love. This beautiful child of the mountains is so artless and charming that Olaf is completely bewildered by her loveliness. His whole soul is as completely charmed as if he actually had drunk the fatal love-potion. Child of nature, intensely human yet with that wild, unrestrained spirit of the elf, Alfhild transports him into a new world of physical and spiritual emotion which leaves his former love in complete oblivion. Both now realize the dreams which had come to them long before they met. Olaf recognizes in Alfhild the flower which, according to his dream, should symbolize perfect happiness and Alfhild in Olaf realizes 'the gallant knight, with the falcon upon his arm' who was to come and bear her away as his bride. They meet in a secret valley on the other side of the mountains far up beyond Olaf's home and hidden from the eyes of the whole world below. After the realisation of their love, the valley below becomes too narrow and oppressive for further existence. Their new life becomes synonymous with the higher valley among the mountains while their former existence, devoid of the great revelation of love, is associated with the narrow confines of the valley in the plains below. When Olaf returns from his meeting with Alfhild he is accosted by Hemming, the servant of his betrothed, to whom he relates his wonderful experience with the elf-child upon the mountains (Act I. Sc. 8). He first tells of the mystical dream in which the flower of love was promised him by the elf-women. 'From that moment on,' he says, 'my mother's room became *too narrow* for me. Over stone and ridge to that fair grove I sped *ever up* with bow and arrow! There I found my elf-maiden.' Alfhild too has felt the stifling narrowness of her former home before 'the gallant knight' came to make her his bride. In the confession of her love to Olaf, she says (Act I. Sc. 10); 'then the valley seemed too narrow for me to live in,' and when Olaf leaves her to visit his mother's home again, she bids farewell to her native valley for it is too narrow for her new life with

Olaf; she must follow him to joy and happiness in the great world beyond. Both Olaf and Alfild use the same metaphor in connection with the limitations of their former existence.

Olaf. Act I. Sc. 8. *Fra denne stund det blev for trangt i min moders stue!*

Alfild. Act I. Sc. 10. *Dalen blev mig for trang.*

Alfild. Act I. Sc. 14. *Farvel, min dal, du est mig for trang, mig vinker alverdens jubel og sang.*

In Act I. Sc. 10, Alfild gives most beautiful expression to the intense loneliness and the yearning for a new life which she felt before the dream of love had been realized. She compares her former life to a lonely birch-tree on the steep mountain side where the barren soil yields but little life. 'High up upon the mountain is a slope so steep that not even the eagle can fasten his claws upon it; there stands a lonely birch-tree, ill it thrives and poor in leaves it is; but it bends its branches down towards the valley that lies far beyond; 'tis as if it longed to join its sisters in the fresh, fertile grove, as if it yearned to be planted in the sun-lit life far below—. As the birch on the mountain so was my life, I longed for the world beyond, for thee I longed many a weary hour, ere I knew that thou didst live. Then the valley seemed too close and narrow'—etc. Fredrik Paasche (*Smaaskrifter fra det litteraturhistoriske seminar*. V. p. 89. Chra. 1908) sees in this longing for a new life of larger experience and realisation a Romantic motif which Ibsen uses after his journey through Germany in 1852, and points out the fact that it is always the young women who experience this emotion; Blanka in *Kæmpehøjen* (of 1854), Eline in *Fru Inger til Østraat*, Margit in *Gildet paa Solhaug* and Alfild in *Olaf Liljekrans*. 'All long for the larger life of the world beyond but none so fervently as Alfild in *Olaf Liljekrans*.' This sentiment is, to be sure, an expression of Romantic vision upon life but is by no means essentially a Romantic conception. It is rather a part of the Norwegian temperament enhanced by the limitations of Norwegian life, physical and social. Fredrik Paasche might have added to this category the name of Martha Bernick in *Samfundets Støtter* (1877) who, caged within the narrow limits of her small circle of life, longs for the release of

her imprisoned soul over the wild sea. Bjørnson, too, has given literary expression to this intense feeling of limitation which Norway naturally imposes upon her sons in his beautiful lyric poem, *Over De Høie Fjelde*. Arne's heart-breaking cry of an imprisoned soul, his enjoyment of the birds which take their winged flight to lands unknown, is the artistic expression of this suffocating feeling which the natural barriers of Norway inspire. Here the natural limitations of Norwegian life are emphasized, in *Samfundets Støtter* the limitations of social conditions imprison the soul. In both there is that groping after something better which will release the victim from its surroundings and afford it a life in which its own individuality may be realized. Such a motif is, therefore, not essentially Romantic but rather an expression of the spirit of Norwegian life which in the author's early works found expression according to Romantic ideals and colored with the variegated hues of a Romantic vision.

In *Olaf Liljekrans* the release from mere prosaic existence into the new life of perfect love is, as is self-realisation in *Paa Vidderne*, an exaltation which is contrasted with the lower life in the valley. After this wonderful revelation Olaf tells Alfild (Act I. Sc. 10): 'No longer could I *thrive down there below*; I felt compelled to rise to the new valley *above*, before I could find peace.'

men *dernede* kunde jeg ikke *trives mere*;
Til dalen måtte jeg *op*, før var der ikke fred for mig.

even as the hero of *Paa Vidderne* says:

Dagens dåd har intet mærke,
slig som den *dernede* drives;
her blev mine tanker stærke,
kun *på vidden* kan jeg trives.

Furthermore, the heights, as symbolical of moral purification, which is the distinctive mark of life's victory in *Paa Vidderne*, appear likewise in *Olaf Liljekrans* as the symbol of renewed strength and a higher courage. To live above the sorrows of life is the exalted mission of every great soul; a moral victory which character alone can acquire. In *Olaf Liljekrans* the time comes when the hero realizes that the happiness which he has been seeking can be attained only

through the sacrifice of all worldly considerations. Through this conviction he experiences a clearness of spiritual vision which he has never known before, for he now realizes that he must first conquer himself before he win back the priceless treasure of love which he has so ruthlessly forfeited. Through moral weakness he has rejected Alfild and trodden her love under foot. Alfild, in revenge, has set fire to the church during the wedding ceremony which was to have united Olaf to his former betrothed. Olaf escapes with his life but is entirely broken in spirit, for he is overcome with remorse for his faithlessness. He has forfeited his love, and thus wrecked his life's happiness. In deep despair he hastens back to that valley upon the mountains where his first dream of love had been realized. There he feels that exaltation which gives him the hero's courage to win the battle of life, just as does the hero in *Paa Vidderne*. He can hardly explain this mysterious inspiration which fills his heart with new blood and imparts a new life to his whole being. He says (Act III. Sc. I): 'strange it is that when I come here, high up above the village, it seems as if there were a new air playing about me, as if fresher blood coursed thro' my veins, as if I had received another spirit, and thought with another mind.' Even so does the hero of *Paa Vidderne* express the exaltation which he experiences upon the high mountains: 'winter life on the wild mountain plains steels my weakened thoughts, here no sentimental song of birds beats through the blood.'

Alfild too experiences the same feeling upon the heights but with her they represent more nearly that spirit of self-mastery which marks *Paa Vidderne*. When she realizes that her ideal life has been shattered, that her fair dream of 'the knight with the falcon upon his arm' will never be realized, she feels impelled to seek the mountain heights that her soul may harden and she may forget the tender memories of the past. Up amid the snow and ice of the bleak mountain-tops, just as the hero of *Paa Vidderne*, she thinks to attain that grand mastery over self which Brand, the priest, glorifies in his single-handed battle with the spirit of compromise. She says, (Act III. Sc. 7): 'Down here I see Olaf, wherever

I go, I must away high up on the heights, that my heart may harden! I must forget and deaden this grief, I must hush to sleep all these tender memories! Up then, up 'mid the snow and ice,—for whether here or there my only refuge is the grave.'

Hernede ser jeg Olaf, hvorhelst jeg færdes;
jeg må op i højden, at mit sind kan hærdes!
 jeg må døve og glemme den tunge lære,
 må dysse i blund alle minder kære!

Velen da! Op mellem is og sne,—
 både her og hist er kun gravens læ!

Paa Vidderne is Ibsen's first poetic expression of the philosophic concept of self-realisation as a life principle, but in *Olaf Liljekrans* we catch the outlines which form the inception of this idea and its connection with the poet's symbol of the mountain heights. In "*Peer Gynt*" the general concept of life upon the heights as a symbol of a higher life appears in the last act. In the sermon over the body of the boy who avoided his duty to the state, in order 'to be himself' within the narrow circle of his own modest life, we hear that he took refuge upon the mountain heights. There above the conflicting interests of the life in the valley below, he completed the circle of his individual existence. He was a criminal in the eyes of the state, but he lived in accordance with a higher law; an unwritten law whose sacred dictate is the complete development of self through the sacrifice of all selfish interests. This is exactly what Peer Gynt did not do because he never lost sight of self. This higher law Ibsen compares to a row of clouds looming far up above the white capped peaks of the Glittertind. Act V. Sc. 3.

En brostling imod landets lov? ja vel!
 Men der er et, som lyser *over loven*,
 så visst, som Glittertindens blanke tjeld
 har sky med *højre tinderad foroven*.

'Such a man will hardly stand a cripple before his God.' II
 When Peer Gynt has finally lost all hope of salvation, his first thought is to find comfort in a farewell visit to the highest mountain peak where he may once more see the sun rise and look upon the promised land, a mystic vision of a new life.

Ibsen still keeps the heights as the general symbol of an exalted and better life.

Act. V. Sc. 10

Jeg vil opad, højt, på den bratteste tinde;
jig vil endnu en gang se solen rinde,
stirre mig træ på det lovede land,
se at få dyngen over mig kavet;
de kan skrive der over: "her er ingen begravet";
og bagefter,—siden—! lad det gå, som det kan.

Here in the very last scenes of "*Peer Gynt*" the inner significance of the mountain heights appears like the last ray of light before the eternal darkness. These words of despair are in direct contrast to those uttered by the hero of *Paa Vidderne*, when *his* life's crisis has come. *Peer Gynt's* life has been a failure; therefore, the last visit to the mountain heights is the beginning of the end. One more breath of the mountain air, one more sight of the promised land and then he must meet the fate of all men who have lived according to the dictates of selfish interests. He must die and die a most ignoble and disgraceful death. Not so with the hero of *Paa Vidderne*, he is not to die, for he has won the crown of life. He has lived according to the highest dictates of self: 'at være sig selv, er, sig selv at døde' (*Peer Gynt*. Act V. Sc. 9). He has something better than self (i. e. selfish interests) to live for, and as he stands there upon the mountain peak we hear the poet Ibsen giving the most powerful expression to his own doctrine of life, when he says: 'Now I am as firm as steel, I shall follow the voice that bids me wander upon the heights. My life in the low-lands I have outlived, up here on the mountain plains there is freedom and God; down there below, the others are still fumbling about in the darkness.'

Ibsen never lost sight of this exalted doctrine of life nor the symbol of the heights as its poetic expression. In his very last work, "*Når Vi Døde Vågner*," (1899) this same conception still appears. Here the heights again symbolize the attainment of life's goal, which Professor Rubeck, the famous sculptor, has missed through a defective sense of the divine relation of his intellectual and artistic nature to the

demands of spiritual love. But now the day of revelation has come. Irene, his famous model, through whom he was enabled to produce his masterpiece, holds the key which can unlock the mystic secrets of his heart and give him back the treasure of love which in his overweening ambition he had forfeited. He had promised her, before their separation, to take her up to the highest mountain peak and from its majestic height show her the glory of the whole world. But in this he had deceived her, for the real glory of life which Irene was to realize in his love he had confused with the perfection of his own art. They now propose to reach that high mountain peak which neither had seen before. At the time of their meeting, Prof. Rubeck is upon a journey along the coast of Norway. Irene proposes instead that he journey with her 'high up among the mountains, as high up as they can climb, higher and still higher.'

Act. I.

Irene.

Rejs heller højt op mellem fjeldene. Så højt op du kan komme. Højere, højere,—altid højere Arnold.

The real significance of her words cannot be mistaken. Together they start out to spend the night upon the high mountain-plain. Through fog and storm, oblivious to all the warnings of the approaching avalanche, they climb up the mountain side. Irene sees the light of happiness beyond and urges her companion to ever greater heights. She will reach the very highest peak, that magic peak, where the glory of life will be revealed.

Act III.

Irene.

Nej, nej—op i lyset og i al den glittrende herlighed.
Op til forjættelsens tinde.

Prof. Rubeck.

Der oppe vil vi fejre vor bryllupsfest, Irene,—du min elskede!

Irene.

Ja, gennem alle tågerne. Og så helt op til tårnets tinde, som lyser i solopgangen.

Thus the highest mountain peak symbolizes the highest and best in life which both attempt to reach in vain, for past opportunities cannot be made good when the psychological moment of fulfillment has passed even though the bitterness of remorse urges the soul on to unwonted efforts.

The love of nature is one of the most marked characteristics of the Romantic movement and one which is given most beautiful expression in *Olaf Liljekrans*. Alfhild, herself, is a child of nature, isolated from intercourse with human society. Her friends are the trees and the flowers, the birds and the sunshine, and she worships unconsciously the God who has wrought all these beauties of the natural world. Such a charm does she exert upon Olaf that he is divested of his former self and becomes like her, half human and half elf, a child of nature. When, after the magic sojourn with Alfhild, he encounters Hemming on his way home, Olaf cannot remember where his mother's home is. His home is with Alfhild upon the mountains for the elf-charm is still upon him. He says (Act I. Sc. 8): 'My mother's house! Where is it? Here in the woods, me thinks, is my home and not in my parents' house; better can I understand the sighing of the tree-tops and the brook's ripple, than my mother's voice. Ah, how beautiful, how quiet it is here! Behold, my palace is adorned for a royal feast.' So too in *Peer Gynt*, Solveig loves the woods and the beauties of nature. When she joins Peer Gynt upon the mountains (Act III. Sc. 3) she feels at home among the trees and expresses to Peer Gynt the assurance, just as Olaf does to Hemming in *Olaf Liljekrans*, that her real home is no longer with her parents but amid the sighing fir-trees and the song of the winds. The phraseology of both passages in *Peer Gynt* and *Olaf Liljekrans* is very similar.

Olaf Liljekrans.

Act I. Sc. 8.

Min moders gård! Hvor er det den står?
 Her tykkes det mig, jeg har hjemme!
 Skoven er bleven mit fædrenhus,
 grantoppens kvæder og elvens sus

kan jeg bedrre forstå, end min moders stemme.
Ej sandt, her er fagert! Ej sandt, her er stille!
 Ser du, min højsal er smykket til gilde.

Peer Gynt.

Act. III. Sc. 3.

Solvejg.

Ringt eller gildt,—her er efter mit sind.
 Så let kan en puste mod den strygende vind.

Men her, *hvor en hører furuen suse,—*
for en stilhed og sang!—her er jeg tilhuse.

More striking still is the resemblance of Peer Gynt's dream, in which he fancies himself as emperor riding upon a magnificent steed and greeted by a throng of ardent admirers, with the dream which Olaf has of his future wedding with Alfhild. Nothing is more characteristic of Peer than this dream. Child of fancy, his whole life is built upon dreams. Folk-lore, trolls, dreams of fantastic imagination are a reality to him. Such is the very nature of Romantic poetry and such is also the spirit and coloring which pervades *Olaf Liljekrans*. Both Peer and Olaf are under the magic spell of fantasy. Peer's very nature is rooted in dreams and he is as completely fascinated by their charms as is the bewildered Olaf who has come under the spell of the elf-maiden's love. In fact, when we compare these two dreams in which both Peer and Olaf picture the realisation of their life's greatest happiness, Peer has ambition to be emporer of the world and Olaf to be united in love with Alfhild, the resemblance in thought and phraseology is so close that the writer is prone to believe that Ibsen must have still retained in *Peer Gynt* the general poetic impression which he had when he wrote this passage in question in *Olaf Liljekrans*. When Olaf, (Act. I. Sc. 12.), hears the voices in the distance which bid him return to his mother's home he cannot immediately sever himself from that magic world of delicious phantasy which has so completely enthralled him. The danger of disillusion heightens the passion of his fevered imagination and transports his whole soul in a love-dream. He sees the bridal procession approaching; 'knights and ladies are riding up to bring home his bride who

is seated upon his swiftest steed with golden saddle, a mighty retinue follows, courtly swains lead his steed by the bridle, fair flowers are strewn by the way-side, the peasant bows down in honor of his bride, and the peasant's wife by the gate courtesies, the church-bells ring out over the whole land; for now Olaf Liljekrans is coming home with his bride.' So too Peer dreams (Act I. Sc. 2), as he lies watching the clouds above, that 'he is mounted upon a steed adorned with silver and gold, a magnificent retinue follows, the people stand along the way and lift their hats in token of recognition, the women courtesy, all recognize the Emperor, Peer Gynt, with his thousand swains, money is scattered for the people along the way-side, England's emperor rises from his festive board, lays aside his crown and says—', Here Peer is rudely awakened from his dreams by Aslak, the smith, who believes Peer to be lying there in a drunken stupor. But we may infer that if Peer had been allowed to continue his dream he would have heard the English sovereign say; 'Hail to thee, Peer Gynt, Emperor of the world,' just as Olaf Liljekrans hears the mighty throng of people greet him with his bride as he returns to his native home. Peer Gynt's dream is very little altered from that of Olaf. With Olaf it is a bridal procession, with Peer Gynt a triumphant procession of an omnipotent sovereign; therefore flowers are strewn for Olaf, while the emperor's generosity and magnanimity are symbolized by a deluge of silver and gold which rain down upon the bewildered inhabitants like manna in the wilderness. A comparison of the two passages shows the identity of conception which underlies the youthful fantasy of the two characters.

Olaf Liljekrans

Act I. Sc. 12

Guldsadlen skal lægges på min rappeste ganger,
forrest i laget skal gå spillemænd og sanger,
derefter skal ride køgemester og prest,
alt folket i bygden skal bydes til gæst!
Høviske svende skal lede din ganger ved hånd,
liflige urter skal drysses på alle veje,
bonden skal bøje sig for dig som en vånd,
og ved ledet skal hans kvinde neje!

kirkeklokkerne skal ringe over landet ud:
nu rider Olaf Liljekrans hjem med sin brud.

Peer Gynt.
Act 1. Sc. 2.

Peer Gynt rider først, og der følger hammange.—
Hesten har sølvtop og guldsko fire.
Selv har han handsker og sabel og slire.
Kåben er sid og med silke foret.
Gilde er de, som han følger i sporet.
Ingen dog sidder så stout på folen.
Ingen dog glitrer som han imod solen.—
Nede står folk i klynger langs gærdet,
løfter på hatten og glaner ivejret.
Kvinderne neje sig. Alle kan kende
kejser Peer Gynt og hans tusende svende.
Tolvskillingsstykker og blanke marker
ned han som småsten på vejen sparker.
Rige som grever blir alle i bygden.
Peer Gynt rider tvers over havet i højden.
Engellands prins står på stranden og venter.
Det samme gør alle Engellands jenter.
Engellands stormænd og Engellands kejser,
der Peer rider frem, sig fra højbordet rejser.
Kejseren letter på kronen og siger—!

In Alfhild we have a strange mixture of the innocent, thoughtless child and the noble qualities of mature womanhood. Romanticism and the realities of life are here in the character of Alfhild struggling for supremacy. As prose and poetry so imagination and reality are in constant conflict. Ibsen never was a pure Romanticist and in *Olaf Liljekrans* the realistic view upon life asserts itself in spite of the highly colored Romantic setting. There is a quality of heroism in Alfhild's character which is strangely contrasted with her otherwise childish nature. Her self-sacrifice and fidelity unto death foreshadow the long list of noble women whom Ibsen portrays in his later works. Of these none is so pathetic and affecting as the character of Solvejg in *Peer Gynt*. Alfhild and Solvejg are productions of the same spiritual ideal of woman, which was the most graceful of Ibsen's literary achievements. Both characters are inspired with the spirit of ideal love and devotion upon which are based the motives for all their actions. Alfhild has sacrificed her home

and all that was dear to her to follow Olaf, for her heart, as she says, 'was full of God's love,' (Act II, Sc. II). So strong is this love that it has become a part of her nature as indispensable to her life as the soil to the grass. She can not pluck it out even though she would, for it has grown about her heart as the bark to the tree. When Lady Kirsten (Act III. Sc. 8) accuses her of having exercised the powers of witchcraft upon Olaf and caused him to disappear from the world Alfhild does not deny the charge, for Olaf is hidden forever within her own heart from which she is powerless to release him. Even though the penalty of death confronts her, she cannot give Olaf back. This beautiful symbol of God's love which locks the spirit of Olaf forever within her heart is the Romantic expression of woman's ideal fidelity which appears so often in Ibsen's subsequent works and one is here, in connection with the Romantic setting of folk lore, involuntarily reminded of the Middle High German folk song—;

Dû bist mîn, ich bin dîn:
des solt dû gewîs sîn.
Du bist beslozen
in mînem herzen,
verlorn ist daz slüzzelfîn:
dû muost immer drinne sîn.

The poetic imagery is the same although Ibsen undoubtedly never was acquainted with the Middle High German.

Olaf Liljekrans.

Act III. Sc. 8.

Fru Kersten.—Sig frem, hvor har du ham?

Alfhild.

(trypper hændene mod brystet)

Herinde i hjertet! Kan du rive ham ud daraf,
da hekser du bedre end jeg!

Solvejg too is filled with 'God's love' and sacrifices all that she held dear, her home, brother and sister, to give her life to him whom she has chosen as her life's companion. Her pathetic confession of this noble sacrifice (Act III. Sc. 3) bears a striking resemblance to that of Alfhild in *Olaf Liljekrans*.

Peer Gynt.

Act III. Sc. 3.

Solvejg.

På hele Guds vide Jord
 har jeg ingen at kalde for far eller mor
Jeg har løst mig fra alle.

Peer Gynt.

Solvejg, du vene,—
 for at komme til mig?

Solvejg.

Ja, til dig alene;
 du får være mig alt, både ven og trøster.
 (i gråd)

Værst var det at slippe min lille syster;—
 men endda værre at skilles fra far;
 men værst ifra den, som ved brystet mig bar;—
 nej, Gud forlade mig, værst fåg jeg kalde
 den sorg at skilles fra dem alle,—alle!

Olaf Liljekrans.

Act II. Sc. II.

Alfhild.

Mit hjem, min fader, alt gav jeg hen
 for at følge Olaf, min hjestensven!
 Han svor mig til, du skal vorde min brud!
 og jeg—Guds kærlighed var i
 mit hjerte;—

Solvejg too has God's love in her heart where she has enshrined the object of her affections. It is this love which has, in spite of Peer's faithlessness, idealized his ignoble character and made her own life beautiful. There is in her love that quality of Christian charity and forgiveness which constitutes the ideal Christ-love. When Peer, in the last act of the play (Act III. Sc. 3) falls down before her in utter despair, he asks her to tell him whither he, as God had conceived him and intended him to be, has strayed. Every soul has a certain mission in life to perform but Peer has missed his. Can he avoid the inevitable fate with which the button-moulder has threatened him? Solvejg answers this riddle of existence with the calm assurance of one who is gifted with a higher spiritual intelligence. Peer cannot perish, for Peer, as God meant him to be, has all these long years been in her safe-keeping; in her faith, in her hope and in her love. He has

been locked within her heart with the magic key of love even as Olaf within the elf-maiden's bosom.

Peer Gynt.

Act III. Sc. 3.

Peer Gynt.

Så sig, hvad du véd!

Hvor var jeg, som mig selv, som den hele, den sande?

Hvor var jeg, med Guds stempel på min pande?

Solvejg.

I min tro, i mit håb og i min kærlighed.

In this connection we are reminded of the last words spoken to Brand as he perishes in the approaching avalanche: 'han er *deus caritatis*' 'he is the god of love.' Ibsen himself explained in a letter of May 4, 1866 that 'caritas' is here used in the sense of heavenly or spiritual love which includes the quality of mercy ('barmhjertighed'), in contrast to physical love ('amor'). This is exactly the same meaning in which the word is used in the Latin Vulgate in the celebrated passage upon charity, First Epistle to the Corinthians, XIII, 13.—'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.' The revised translation of the Bible has substituted for 'charity' the word 'love,' which, as Ibsen suggested, with reference to the phrase '*Deus caritatis*,' includes within itself a certain quality of mercy or charity. It is exactly this quality of human love which was lacking in Brand, and therefore prevented him from carrying out his divine mission which God had written upon his heart. Moral laws, however perfect in themselves, can never be enforced upon the human race without taking into account the element of love which is the real basis of all God's laws. During the composition of Brand, Ibsen was a diligent student of the Bible, as he, himself, said in a letter to Bjørnson. And in Brand's failure it seems possible (as Professor Olsen suggests in his excellent edition of Brand, Chicago, 1908—p. 339) to point out the very words, which underlie this passage, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: XIII, 1: 'though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (i. e. love), I am becoming as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.' In *Peer Gynt*, on the other hand, it is this very love which solves the problem of Peer's existence (at least as

Solvejg conceived it), without reference to those moral laws which Brand would enforce to the letter upon a compromising generation. Thus *Peer Gynt* stands in this respect, as well as in regard to the philosophic concept of self-realization, as a direct antipode to *Brand*. But though Ibsen may have had this biblical passage in mind when he wrote *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, nevertheless the idea of love as the all sustaining force in life and the secret of true happiness, existed previous to the composition of these two works in *Olaf Liljekrans*. Human love, as essential to man's redemption and ultimate happiness is a truth which Ibsen repeatedly emphasized in his dramas. In *Olaf Liljekrans* and *Peer Gynt* we have a Romantic expression of this vital doctrine of life. Both Olaf and Peer have been faithless but they still remain untainted and idealized in the hearts of these noble women. Therefore, though neither Olaf (at the time when Alfhild is confronted by Lady Kirsten, Act III, Sc. 8) nor Peer have by any means redeemed themselves, they are nevertheless already redeemed in thir lovers' affections through the magnanimous forbearance of spiritual love (*caritas*). This is exactly the same quality of love to which 'deus caritatis' (*Brand*) seems to refer, as Ibsen explains the term in his letter of 1866; for God's love ('Gud's K rlighed') is a spiritual love which is infinite in its mercy ('barmh rtighed'). In fact it would seem as if Ibsen had merely translated Alfhild's own words ('Gud's K rlighed': 'God's love') into Latin phraseology ('deus caritatis'—'the God of love') in order to accommodate the concept to the ecclesiastical setting in *Brand*.

Finally, we are reminded, in connection with *Brand*, of Alfhild's description of God's church ('Guds hus'), Act II. Sc. 4. Alfhild, to whom all human institutions are entirely strange, has caught sight of a church and witnessed a religious ceremony there. Bewildered by the sight and ignorant of the significance of the service she asks Olaf to tell her who lives in this strange home. He replies: "all who are good and pious as thou art, all who are children in thought and soul. That is the church, God's house; it belongs to Him." In her naive conception of religion which embraces the whole natural world Alfhild cannot conceive of God's being confined within the

narrow walls of a wooden house. The great Father dwells in a much larger home, 'as high as the stars overhead where the white duck flies, so high that no one can see it except the little child in its dreams.' It is this house of God, allembreaching in its ethical and religious significance, which Brand seeks, instead of the temporal structure which has been erected in his honor. His is '*livets store kirke*' (Act V), 'which has neither measure nor end.' 'Its floor is the green earth, the mountain-plain, the meadow, sea and fjord: and its roof is the canopy of heaven.'

Brand.

Act V.

Kirken har ej mål og ende.
Gulvet er den grønne jord,
vidde, vang, og hav og fjord;
himlen kun kan hvælet spænde
over, så den vorder stor.

So likewise Alfchild's church:

Olaf Liljekrans.

Act II. Sc. 5.

Den store fader! Ak, skemte du vil!
Hans hut er jo højt over stjernerne små,
hvor den hvide skysvane svømmer,
så højt som intet øje kan nå
uden barnets, der det blunder og drømmer.

It has often been noted that Henrik Ibsen's works form one continued chain of poetic and philosophic thought. It is left to the student of literature to discover the various links which compose this chain. The study of *Olaf Liljekrans* and Ibsen's early dramas has served to draw into closer contact the author's famous Realistic works with his earliest poetic efforts. *Olaf Liljekrans* has been particularly productive in this regard and it is to be hoped that other of Ibsen's Romantic works will be studied with this end in view.

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